
Review

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Source: *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 104, No. 411 (Winter, 1991), pp. 137-139

Published by: American Folklore Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/541157>

Accessed: 24-12-2015 02:28 UTC

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It used to be—in the days of F. J. Child, G. L. Kittredge, J. M. Hart, Archer Taylor, Stith Thompson, and Francis Lee Utley—that the great folklorists and the great readers of medieval literature were one and the same. With the appearance of such books as Bowden's and Kendrick's, we find a second, long-awaited confluence of two studies separated too long.

“Beauty and the Beast”: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale. By Betsy Hearne. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. xv + 247, preface, 40 illustrations, 4 notes, appendixes, index. \$29.95)

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Children's literature, like folklore, is at its best an interdisciplinary field of inquiry drawing from a wide variety of academic approaches. Hearne's study of the well-known folktale “Beauty and the Beast” is a careful literary examination of the story as serious literature for readers in general but with special emphasis on its place in children's literature.

After a brief preface, Hearne presents seven chapters that examine the story as it moves from oral into printed forms. She draws on printed variants from 18th-century France to 20th-century North America. Her appendixes extend the story through presentation of two texts and an annotated bibliography of 19th-century examples and an essay by Larry DeVries.

Hearne's opening words emphasize that fairy-tale research requires an interdisciplinary approach rather than methodologies that force the stories into particular schemes of interpretation. She underlines her own cross-disciplinary intentions by quoting Lévi-Strauss's words on the authenticity of *all* versions and variants, with none taking precedence over any other. With this flexible concept in mind, her goal is to examine the long life of this durable tale as it passed through literary and mass media forms from the 1700s to the present day, largely but not entirely in books intended for young readers. Scattered references to oral tales appear, but these are not her major interest. Perhaps her intentions might have been more obvious with a more precise title indicating her literary approach.

She is quite clear in her opening words, following up her comments on interdisciplinary approaches with the observation that children's librarians have traditionally received interdisciplinary training and are thus specially prepared to consider the various aspects of fairy tales. She also noted that library schools offered courses in children's literature and in storytelling long before they were available through education or English departments. One of her intentions in this book, then, is to emphasize the validity—academic and aesthetic—of the genre of fairy tales as they have appeared in print, primarily in children's books, for the past four centuries. “Beauty and the Beast” provides an excellent model for such a study since it has been so widely disseminated.

Hearne treats the text she includes as serious literature and focuses on discovering those elements that have been most effective in keeping the story alive:

There is, in every storyteller who deals with “Beauty and the Beast,” a dialectic between the force of the material and the will to shape it. In each case, the images have dominated the intent. This leads to the question of what patterns have emerged through the many storytellers' varied development of character, narrative structure, narrative voice, and image/object/symbol—the groups of elements originally identified by structural function. [p. 125]

In the body of the work, she discusses a variety of authored texts from a literary standpoint and attempts to discover “which versions are most successful and why” (p. 123). She mentions

the long-standing continuity of literary and oral variants and claims that, "the most effective *literary* versions prove to share the same motifs that have been retained in *oral* variants" (p. 123), though her failure to include oral texts in breadth or depth weakens this otherwise relevant observation.

The strength of the book rests firmly on Hearne's recognition of the multitextual nature of traditional narratives and at least a general understanding of the open ways in which stories are received by their audiences:

Each teller/reader hears a different story, according to his or her life experience. It is not a correct reading that I seek here, but an exploration of the multiple dimension embodied in any great work of art, whether it is oral, visual, or literary. [p. xiv]

Folklorists will be surprised that she does not also credit the *composers* of the tales with their own unique interpretations. This is not a folklore study, nor does she claim it to be, but her use of the term "oral tradition" leads readers to expect more precise information on just what she means by this and what texts she is referring to. There is very little discussion of specific traditional tales, and none at all of any that might be found in recent times on this continent. While Hearne's reasons for composing this carefully researched book have very little to do with folklore scholarship or with oral variants and versions of AT 425A, B, or C, the book would still benefit from a fuller view of oral and written texts as they have existed together. It is not enough to state that there has been a long tradition of exchange between these two methods of narrative expression without detailing more precisely how this has come to be. Her appendixes do include two full variants of "Beauty and the Beast": a text of Madame Beaumont's story from a 1783 English translation of the 1756 French text and the French text (untranslated) of an oral version in a collection edited by Paul Delarue and Marie-Louise Teneze in 1964. She also offers an annotated "sampling" of 26 children's books from 1804–94 which provides readers with some basis of comparison for Hearne's observations, though she does not explain how and why these particular selections were chosen, nor why the 20th-century works discussed in her text are not included.

Her final words reemphasize her literary goals in hopes that scholars of children's literature will expand their approaches in order to "apply new vision to a new literature for the newly born." She presents "Beauty and the Beast" as a model for such an expanded approach. As a study of fairy tales as literature, particularly children's literature, Hearne's goals are reasonably well met. Her position would have been more forceful if there had been a fuller attempt to include oral tradition in general and in particular.

The structural essay by Larry DeVries included in Appendix one, "Literary Beauties and Folk Beasts: Folktale Issues in Beauty and the Beast," is presumably intended to provide a folkloric approach. It is only partially successful because the literary beauties seem to dominate here over the folk beasts, as if folktales were primarily an "iconic" literature more useful as an inspiration for written works rather than powerful in their own right. DeVries limits himself largely to an examination of narrative structure (largely based on Propp's model), a narrow approach that seems to belie the breadth of vision encouraged by Hearne. More importantly, he hardly touches on the wealth of texts available in folklore collections and instead relies on popular collections like that of Afanase'ev. He does mention a single variant from Leonard Roberts's *South from Hell-fer-Sartin*, but gives no indication of the tale's enormous popularity among oral tellers in Anglo-American folk tradition.

Neither DeVries nor Hearne devotes sufficient space to discussing the three quite separate variants of AT 425 (A. B. C.). Instead, DeVries lumps them together as one story with different details. He might have noted that AT 425B, for example, features a much bolder heroine and

results in the double transformation of both beauty (who must follow her beast and succeed in various tasks) and the beast (who has been entrapped by another woman even after his initial disenchantment). It is also significant that the published sources he draws from include almost no recent folklore scholarship that focuses on the existence of stories in living oral contexts.

Still, DeVries does show some understanding of the enduring power of the Beauty/Beast pattern as it continues to manifest itself in contemporary forms:

What a wealth of variety this tale supports—bonga lovers. King Kong, futuristic stories of gorgeous androids. The tale of the lover of the other that is not what it seems might be the tale of the love of tales themselves. [p. 188]

This is an intriguing observation and one that might be the beginning of another book rather than the end of this one.

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1A. Title of Publication Journal of American Folklore	1B. PUBLICATION NO. 0 0 2 1 8 7 1 5	2. Date of Filing 11/15/90
3. Frequency of Issue Quarterly (January, April, July, October)	3A. No. of Issues Published Annually 4	3B. Annual Subscription Price \$50.00
4. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, City, County, State and ZIP+4 Code) (Not printers) 1703 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009		
5. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of the Publisher (Not printers) American Folklore Society, 1703 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009		
6. Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (This item MUST NOT be blank)		
Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address) American Folklore Society, 1703 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009		
Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address) Burt Feintuch, Center for the Humanities, Murkland Hall, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824-3596		
Managing Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address) None		
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